



JOAN BALLWEG

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

PO Box 8952, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8952
(608) 266-8077
Toll-free: (888) 534-0041
Rep.Ballweg@legis.wi.gov

41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**SB 401: 1-day Fishing License
Testimony by State Representative Joan Ballweg
Before the Senate Committee on Transportation,
Tourism, Forestry and Natural Resources
January 20, 2010**

Thank you Chairman Holperin for sponsoring and introducing Senate Bill 401, a bill to create 1-day resident and non-resident fishing licenses in Wisconsin. I hope this legislation gives residents and non-residents alike the chance to get hooked, on fishing.

To most people, fishing is seen as an enjoyable escape from life's daily pressures, but recreational fishing is much more than just a getaway for many Americans. Spending a pleasurable day on the water usually involves at least some expense for travel, equipment and supplies. Anglers not only contribute to industries such as fishing tackle and boat manufacturing, but have a positive effect on the tourism and hospitality businesses in our state.

According to the American Sportfishing Association, Wisconsin is ranked in the Top 10 states for the economic impact of fishing. Retail sales related to fishing are over \$1.5 billion in Wisconsin and the total economic impact is over \$2 billion. Fishing helps provide over 30,000 jobs in Wisconsin, from bait shops to boat dealers to hotels and restaurants. Wisconsin is second only to Florida in the economic impact due to non-resident anglers who visit our state.

During these difficult economic times, I believe we should be doing things that help promote tourism in Wisconsin. Many of our small 'Mom and Pop' businesses depend on both in-state and out-of-state tourists. All of our neighboring states Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Minnesota offer the option of a 1-day resident or non-resident fishing license. Passing SB 401 will help Wisconsin remain competitive with the surrounding states. (In preparation for today's hearing, I contacted the DNR in all four states to see what impact the 1-day license had in their individual states. Minnesota has offered the 1-day license since 1982, and by far it has the highest use of the 1-day license at 8% of the resident licenses purchased. However, during that same time period, the number of resident licenses, both annual and 1-day, has increased. Michigan sells around 40,000 resident 1-day licenses out of a total 1.2 million licenses sold. Iowa, which started offering 1-day and 3-day licenses in 2004, said that those two licenses combined account for less than 1% of their resident license sales. If any area was impacted in the three states, it was non-resident license sales, where the 1-day option was as high as one-third of their non-resident license sales. Illinois did not respond.)

My district includes a number of spots that are popular tourist destinations, and I have heard from local fishing guides, bait shop owners and the chamber of commerce that this change would be a positive for the area. However, this bill is not specific to one area of the state, and based on the geographic diversity of the co-sponsors, many of you share my feelings that this would be a good change for the state as a whole.

The purpose of this bill is to entice the casual angler or the first time angler, who wants to give fishing a try, and in so doing, get hooked. Many

family budgets are currently stretched thin, and the cost of an annual license may be a deterrent for some individuals who are not regular anglers. For avid anglers, an annual license is still going to be the best deal, but this bill would allow that individual to introduce a friend or co-worker to fishing, without that person buying a year long license before trying the sport. A provision that was added to this bill, that is different from other proposals introduced in previous sessions, is that the fee for the 1-day license could be applied to the purchase of an annual license within the same license year.

Society as a whole is busier than it was just a generation ago. The proliferation of extra-curricular activities for our young people creates many competing demands for our limited free-time. Since 1995, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted a National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. According to the most recent data from 2001-2006 there was a 4% decline in the number of sportspersons. Passing SB 401 may actually increase license sales and help introduce people to fishing that otherwise may not participate.

Nationally polls indicate that the earlier people take up fishing, the more active in the sport they become. Some 85 percent of freshwater anglers began fishing before they were 13. Obviously, the DNR recognizes the value of exposing young people to fishing, and this bill would help introduce adults to fishing.

If any members have questions regarding this proposal, I would be happy to answer them at this time.